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RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 0022  
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RHMFIUU/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHINGTON DC  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC  
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC  
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 MUMBAI 000079

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SUBJECT: MUMBAI ATTACKS, LESSONS LEARNED

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11. (U) Begin Summary. The Mumbai Consulate has compiled the following lessons learned after managing the response to the terrorist attack which occurred in on November 26. The attack engaged the entire Consulate - consular officers, public affairs, security officers, management and political/economic officers. End Summary.

12. (U) Background: Beginning at 2120 on Wednesday, November 26, ten men staged attacks at nine different locations in southern Mumbai, India, using explosives and firearms. At least four of these sites, hotels and a cafi, are heavily frequented by Americans and other non-Indian travelers to Mumbai. The other sites included a cinema, hospital, train station, and a Jewish community center. In addition, bombs were left in at least two taxis, one of which detonated in northern Mumbai and the other in an eastern portion of the city. Over 40,000 American citizens, most of Indian origin, are estimated to live in Mumbai's Consular district, and large numbers of tourists come to the city at this time of year. This catastrophic attack was unprecedented in India, where past terrorist strikes have involved targeted bomb and grenade attacks. The events unfolded over a period of days and involved multiple specific locations as well as moving attacks and confrontations with law enforcement personnel. Reports of hostages, injured and missing Americans, lost belongings, impending evacuations, and multiple deaths flooded the U.S. Consulate General throughout the events. Significant numbers of Americans were directly affected, and thousands of concerned travelers in India and family members in the U.S. contacted the Department and the Consulate for information and assistance. The entire Consulate was mobilized to staff the crisis: FSNs, FSOs, and EFMs from all sections, foregoing a long Thanksgiving weekend. The Consulate switchboard fielded over 3000 phone calls, and countless other calls and emails came directly to employees' personal cell phones, direct lines, and PDAs.

13. (SBU) Managing the Crisis: We created two working groups to handle the event. The first group consisted of POL-ECON / Public Affairs / Management /RSO/FCS and the health unit and focused on reporting to the Department and Delhi, public affairs, security and management. The second group was a consular group and

focused on meeting the needs of our American Citizens. We received inquiries from 788 Americans. The three hotels attacked provided guest lists that included 98 Americans and members of the Consulate were in telephone contact with at least 24 Americans trapped in the hotels until evacuation. Of 171 confirmed deaths, 29 were non-Indians from 15 different countries. Six Americans lost their lives, more than from any other country except India. Two Americans were wounded.

¶4. (SBU) The Working Groups were disbanded on Monday, December 1 and regular consular operations resumed on that day. A normal schedule of 1100 NIV interviews began on Tuesday, December 2. The ACS Unit continues to process death certificates, the return of personal effects, and other follow-up action that resulted from the attacks, in addition to a normal workload of routine services.

¶5. (SBU) SPECIFIC LESSONS LEARNED:

¶A. Immediate response: Personnel Accountability. As post management became aware of the crisis, our immediate response was to activate our phone tree and account for all employees and family members. Consulate issued a warden notice within about two hours of the first events. Our continuing challenge was to understand the evolving nature of the attack. No one, including local police, clearly understood what was happening. First reports were of a "gangland" style shooting at Leopold's Cafe and other locations. During the course of the night it became clear that this attack was different from previous events, and it was unclear how it would end.

¶B. Security: Limited RSO resources at Post and in the Mission India limited the initial response provided, although Post benefited greatly from the additional agents, local guards, and police who augmented security programs and allowed DS to focus

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on the need to assess the safety environment of Consular staff. This was also the area that post received the most immediate and needed security reinforcements with help from Delhi and other consulates. While we were able to get communication out to our staff via phone trees, we realized that if the phone had gone down - we could have had a problem. We subsequently renewed and strengthened our radio program.

¶C. Technology. Technology was both an asset and a hindrance to good communication. At times, the volume and variety of information coming in to the Consulate was difficult to manage effectively. The Consulate's switchboard received over 3000 calls, which were routed to a message that did not include information on emergency services and needed to be changed. Over 1000 emails were exchanged between the CA Task Force and post, and were not always addressed to the appropriate responder. Despite the abundance of communication tools, it was difficult to access good information because of the moving, changing situation. The CA Task Force provided valuable assistance in fielding inquiries and providing a point-of-contact regarding information about missing citizens. This work was aided by the Consular Task Force (CTF) software in the Combined Consular Database (CCD), which provided a point of coordination between Conoffs in Mumbai and in Washington. PDAs and cell phones were also invaluable for in-field work, but slow system speeds, inconsistent availability of equipment, and network unreliability limited this use. Onsite Consular ISC staff provided access to systems, including increasing the size of mailboxes, providing FSNs and TDYers with access to systems, and connecting phones to long distance service. Extra cell phone batteries, telephones and more frequent radio program are recommended.

¶D. Public Affairs played an important role in disseminating information for the benefit of Americans who need to know what action to take. Hot line information should be released for television. Post also recommends in an emergency, one POC be identified for updating, approving, and posting travel alerts, travel warnings, warden messages, website information, and email

auto-responses for all of Mission India during crisis situations in order to ensure consistent and timely release and posting of public information.

1E. Consular Working Group: The Consular Section Chief headed the Consular Working Group and coordinated with CA's Task Force. Key officers who live near the Consulate set up the phone center within an hour of the attacks and constituted the 12-hour consular night shift over the following four days. Officers were assigned to visit hospitals, morgues, and evacuation sites for the purpose of identifying American citizens and were accompanied by Medical Office or RSO staff, when possible. GOI security forces changed locations of evacuation sites and in some cases some sites could not be approached safely. Each case was evaluated by the security officer and Consul General. Each Consular shift was organized around POCs who monitored developments about specific affected sites and individuals. This allowed both continuity and handoff between shifts, and provided an informed and consistent contact for concerned family members and the CA Task Force. Post notes the usefulness of S/ES recommendations to use identified skills appropriately, and benefited from the experience of an FSO who spoke Hebrew and was able to work with the affected orthodox Jewish community. Hindi and Marathi speakers were assigned to contact hospitals, and one officer who had worked on after-event reporting in Islamabad coordinated logging and reporting.

1F. Locally engaged staff were key. LES staff member knowledge and experience was invaluable, particularly with providing contact information, and access to local services and contacts. Post noted that some FSNs had more thorough knowledge of the FAM than experienced FSOs and helped ensure ongoing service to American citizens during and after the events. Emergency passports were issued throughout the ordeal and Post coordinated exit permits with Indian immigration authorities on behalf of travelers. Onsite services were provided due to the danger of travel; Post used an onsite passport photographer and arranged

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for exit permits to be issued at the airport.

1G. Coordinating with other consulates helped. Eighteen foreign nationals were killed, in addition to six Americans. Small staffing and large demand from their own citizens affected the response from other foreign Consulates. Dual nationals and overseas residency created some confusion in identifying nationality and appropriate services for some. Post coordinated closely with Israeli consuls on behalf of Israeli-American victims, and coordinated onsite evacuation reception with a number of Consulates and the affected hotels.

1H. TDYers were ready to come in and we appreciated the support provided by the department. In hind-sight, we probably did not need everyone that eventually arrived but we were not sure how long the event was going to go on. We could have used a handful of consular officers to work NIV operations for two days just to allow some officers rest before normal operations resumed.

1I. Management: The GSO/Acting Management Officer provided resources to assist with round-the-clock staffing and offsite operations, including hiring extra cars and drivers for TDY staff, additional maintenance shifts, and providing direct assistance to affected Americans, including transport and food. Post recommends that fiscal authorization be provided even faster in crisis situations. The RMPO arrived within a few days and conducted well-received workshops for FSNs and FSOs on the effects of post-traumatic stress and planned a repeat visit. If possible we would have brought the RMO/P in earlier to help with Amcit hostages who had been trapped by the attacks in the hotels.

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